

Worship Resources “Traveling Light”
Pentecost 17, Year C, 2nd October, 2022
2 Timothy 1:1-14 NRSV / Luke 17:5-10 NIV

Prelude

Opening Music [video] [Walk by Faith](#) — written and performed by Jeremy Camp,
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Welcome Guests / Announcements

Pass the Peace

Opening Hymn *Here in This Place* **6**

Call to Worship

God has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearance of our Savior, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Let us worship God.

Invocation

Spirit of God, enlighten our hearts to the reality of divine presence in our midst. Let our worship be pleasing in your sight, so that our gathering is an experience of deep communion with you and one another. In the name of Jesus Christ, this is our prayer. Amen.

Epistle Reading: 2 Timothy 1:1-14 NRSV

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.

Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy.

I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.

For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands;

for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God,

who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher,

and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him.

Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

A Time of Prayer

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

God, You have called us to be a people of prayer, taught us to call on you, and promised to answer the prayers of Your people mercifully. We come before you this morning seeking your presence in our lives.

Though Your grace may seem slow, we trust, O Lord, that You will grant us all things needful in their proper time. Grant us patience and humility, that we may not despair or grow weary of waiting, but live by faith each day.

Though we sometimes feel alone, Your presence is there to nurture us to maturity of life and to provide a refuge of love. Even more, You have provided us with our church

family and the fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Guide us to welcome the stranger in Christ's name and to love one another as You have loved us.

Though we often yearn for that which we do not have, You have not abandoned us to disappointment. Be with those who yearn for blessings not yet received, for hope that is not in sight, and for the necessities of life not yet realized.

Though we are filled with the sound of words, You speak, O God, the Word of Life and grant us the Holy Spirit, that we may hear and, hearing, believe. Raise up many who will speak Your Word to us: faithful disciples who will do Your bidding, bringing hope and light to those who live in the shadows of fear and desperation that this world casts.

Though we fear the world is out of control, You have placed limits upon all things. O God, hear us on behalf of those who exercise authority over us, who order us according to laws, who execute justice, and who defend us against our enemies. May your presence effect change in those who follow paths that lead away from love and justice, and guide us in how to resist the power of evil often so prevalent around and above us.

Though the afflictions of the body and mind confound us, You have promised to be with us in every need and to grant us grace sufficient for all needs of body and soul. Be with all for whom we pray that suffer from illness, grief, and those concerns carried in the hearts of those among us, that they may know the comfort of Your presence, healing from their ills, and strength to carry them through this time of trouble.

Though time and money seem in such short supply to us, You have promised to supply us with all that we need and more. Give us generous hearts to share all that we have been blessed with..

Though earthly bread too often dominates our thoughts, You have given us Christ, the bread of life, whose flesh and blood are the true and real food of everlasting life. Open our eyes to recognize Christ's life and sacrifice in this eucharistic feast, and grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may eat in repentance and faith now, in preparation for the marriage supper of the Lamb which has no end.

All these things, O Lord, and whatever else we need, we pray You to grant us, for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who died and rose again and even now lives and reigns with You, now and forever. **Amen.**

Hymn

Bless'd Assurance

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Gospel Lesson:

Luke 17:5-10 NIV

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.

“Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’?

Won’t he rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’?

Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?

So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’ ”

Message – *Traveling Light*

When you hear the word “faith,” what comes to mind? Is it a list of rules and regulations to follow? Maybe it’s words of repentance and commitment you uttered long ago. For some it may be more of a charismatic or spiritual state of being you constantly seek to deepen. For many, it’s also something we inherit from our family.

In our reading from Paul this morning, he reminds Timothy of the noteworthy faith tradition of his ancestors, how he is descended from two women of great faith. I too, when thinking of faith, always remember my paternal grandmother who made sure I was at church every possible Sunday in the first twelve years or so of my life. Regardless of whether we see faith as trying to walk the straight and narrow, or some other definition of what our spirituality means to us, underlying most definitions is a conception of commitment. We commit ourselves in some fashion to adhering to a certain perspective in our lives.

In the Christian faith, that is influenced in some fashion by the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Both of our scripture lessons this morning are about faith, specifically our own personal faith journeys. Paul encourages Timothy to remain true to his evangelical calling by the Spirit through the laying on of hands, and following in the footsteps of his mother and grandmother, who also were great people of faith. Paul knows the hardships that could befall him, sharing the gospel in the Roman world of his day, sensing his trepidation in the tears he shed when they last parted. Yet he encourages him to be true to his calling, to live the life he’s been led to. It’s not about success or accomplishment, but undeserved grace, that is not merit-based.

Likewise Jesus encourages his disciples to keep their faith, which on the surface, seems a bit more convoluted and troublesome. In effect, he compares them to “unworthy servants who have only done their duty;” and that is the more generous translation. The NRSV translation, which I usually prefer as it tends to better capture the nuances of ancient Greek, uses the terminology of slaves. Now the argument could be made not to take this out of historical context, that slavery in first century Palestine was a central part of that

culture and Jesus was using a familiar analogy that his hearer would understand. However, to our ears in the 21st century, that terminology carries much more baggage and meaning, with the history of chattel slavery in this country, the after effects of which are still felt.

But I would argue that Jesus isn't meaning this to be demeaning or belittling to begin with. In the verses preceding today's gospel reading, Jesus warns the disciples about the temptations that come in a life of faith, and that they might stumble, but to take care not to cause others to stumble which is infinitely worse. In response, they respond to have their faith increased to which he replies with the mustard seed and servant analogies to make his point.

But what is that point? Is it that they are worthless servants who are expected to do great things in humility because of their low status? One could certainly read the passage that way on the surface, and this passage has been misused to keep others down and subdued over the centuries, whether slaves or the lower servant classes, or even women in the household. Yet there is another perspective from which to view this lesson. I would think it would make more sense for Jesus to be encouraging his disciples, who know all too well the challenges they are likely to be facing, than to be chastising them as lowly and without worth.

What if these are actually meant to be words of comfort and encouragement? Jesus tells them that the smallest faith, that of a mustard seed, can do great things. In other words, their faith is sufficient. One thing the apostles understood, as Paul verbalized in his letter to Timothy, was that the strength of our faith is not entirely dependent on us. When we enter into a life of faith, we walk in relationship with a God who understands the struggle. A God who strengthens us with God's own purpose, power, and grace. The disciples knew the faith of Jesus, who came as a servant to all. So when we think of this lesson in Luke, we need to keep that perspective in mind. It wasn't herculean efforts of faith that was required of the disciples. Like Timothy, all that was required was to do what was expected of you, with humility, always with the other in mind. Living a life exemplifying the gospel is all that was required. A life in contrast to the life of the world of empire around them.

At a conference I attended a few years ago on a faithful response to the plight of the Palestinians, one of the speakers made an interesting point. He reminded us how Jesus taught of the kin-dom of heaven drawing near, but that concept may be a poor translation. The Greek word *kosmos* is often translated as "heaven" in the New Testament, but it is most often used in Greek culture to mean "order" or "arrangement." Greeks saw the world and the heavens as arranged in a certain order, so their word for those concepts reflected this sense of rules and arrangement. So from that perspective, the kin-dom of heaven is a different arrangement, a different way of being.

Our walks of faith should set us apart, as followers of a gospel that makes us servants to all, following the example of Christ. I'd like to wrap up today with an illustration from Canadian

pastor Steven Davis. He shares that “It’s very bright in the middle of the day, but no matter how bright the day is, night eventually comes and the light fades away. However, it is possible - in theory at least - to live our entire lives in the light of the sun, if we were simply to keep journeying westward fast enough to keep up with the sun. But because we don’t make that journey west, the day fades into night; light changes to darkness. The journey would be too difficult, it would cost too much, it would be too tiring. It’s easier just to be satisfied with where we are.

That’s not a bad analogy for faith. Walking in the light of Christ - continually - is a difficult journey. It carries with it certain costs. It can at times be tiring and discouraging. But it has one great reward: it is a journey that we take with Jesus constantly at our sides, urging us on, lifting us and carrying us when we weary, providing for us when we think we just can’t give any more. There is a great source of strength to see us through this difficult journey of faith - the source of strength is the light of Christ, and it never fades, as long as we continue in faith and continue to trust, and continue to act on what we believe. If we do those things, the light of Christ will continue to shine within us and through us.” So what does your journey look like? Do you live a faithful life, one that illustrates gospel living day in and day out?

There’s an old story of a Brethren man who was asked if he was a Christian. He responded by saying, “Don’t ask me, ask my neighbor.” What would your neighbor say? Is your faith evident in what you say, how you act, or in what you choose not to say or do? In today’s church we talk a lot about numbers: numbers in the pews on Sunday, numbers of members, numbers on balance sheets. Often those numbers don’t look so good. Probably the biggest reason they don’t is it’s not so clear that we’re not seen or perceived meeting our share of the bargain, doing what’s expected of us as followers of the living Christ. Would anybody who met us know we are Christians? Would anybody who walks through those doors, or walks their dog past our building, feel the gospel in how we walk and talk, or see the gospel clearly at work in this building? If not, how do we change that? I wish there was a clear, specific, obvious answer to that question, but if we’re willing to walk together in faith, we will find that answer, that calling, and humbly do the work we are called to.

While we have our own individual callings and faiths to live out, we also walk with each other, in relationship, as a community. Our faith is relational: to God and with each other. As God through the Spirit supports our individual efforts, we support each other, in those times of darkness and discouragement. Individually we share the light of Christ but together we create a beacon for the world to see, or we should. If we're not clearly seen as that light on the hill, then we need to take a hard look at who we are, and what we're doing, or not doing.

I pray this morning, as we join together with Christ as a community of believers through the ancient rite of communion, we think about how we can ignite that light in our community and draw others to join in the work we are called to. Amen.

A Call to Serve

We give thanks for the planet we share with all of God's creation and for imagining a world-made-new. Let us share what we have as one way of creating a world free from hunger, poverty, and oppression.

A Time for Reflection - *Musical Interlude*

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Embolden us, O God, as people of your global village to trust a new creation is possible.

May our sharing be a symbol of that trust. Amen.

A Time of Communion

Invitation to the Table (Responsive)

Friends, what we are about to do is to celebrate the Joyful Feast of the people of God.

When we are able, with the Holy One, to experience the vision of love for God's Global Village. here on earth – then all of creation will come as equal companions to sit at this table.

In the meantime, you and I are invited to eat and drink, to be nourished and renewed for the ongoing work of justice, embracing mercy and walking humbly with God.

This is an open table, all are welcome, no exceptions.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving (Responsive)

One: Holy One, One of many names and faces, we thank you for how the light came out of darkness, for the division of the waters and dry land, for creating the whole planet up and through the cosmos and calling it sacred.

All: We thank you for creating us in your image, to live connected with love, for the gift of life, speech, and movement and freedom to live in Your Way.

One: Moses revealed your vision in commandments. Your prophets unleashed cries for justice when your planet's beauty was violated.

All: Through long generations we have ebbed and flowed with suffering and sorrow, healing and renewal. In the most beautiful and oppressive of times, You still called us beloved.

One: You are full of wonder and awe, O God. Your ways are just and prophetic. With all of creation in all times and places, with our brothers and sisters around your planet we sing to you in one voice:

All: *Holy, holy, holy, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God. Hosanna in the highest.*

One: Holy God, Creator of milk and honey, of wheat and grapes, this table has over time been a symbol of restoration and community, a call to remembrance. Draw us into thanksgiving for the gift of receiving your holy welcome and the powerful memory of the justice work of the radical rabbi from Nazareth, Jesus.

All: *We share bread and wine from your global planet, symbolizing the suffering and beauty, and the need for freedom on every mountain, in every river, on land, and sea, in village, farm land, town and city.*

One: As we consume the bread and cup of community, root us firmly in your vision of justice, intended for Your One Body. Let its flavor move us to a commitment to share such welcome and hospitality with all who live and breathe on your planet.

All: *As we drink the cup and consume the bread, may your Spirit be with us, enlivening us with courage and hope to join together in the sacred work of restoring your planet.*

Words of Institution

On the night before Jesus was betrayed, he sat at table with his closest companions. He took a loaf and blessed it in a way those at the table had never heard before. After the blessing, he broke the bread and said, "Take. Eat. All of you. This is the bread of the Body, exiled, silenced, broken, beaten and executed. This is my body broken for you. When you eat of this, do it in remembrance of me."

In the same way after supper, while Jesus was still at table, he took a cup, and he blessed it. After the blessing he said, "Take this and divide it among all of you. This is the blood of community. Blood shed in war and in homes. Blood that carries the memories of beauty and justice. Blood that flows with new beginnings for God's One, Holy Body. When you drink of this cup, do it in remembrance of me."

This morning we will serve ourselves in the pews. As we prepare to partake together this sacred meal, we come into the presence of the Divine. As you do so,

Come observing silence. Come remembering those places where justice is sparse; Come remembering those who have no hope; Come remembering all those who

risk their lives for the sake of God's justice.

These are holy things for holy people. Let us come into this holy space together!

Prayer after Communion (In Unison)

As one body, we lament with those who lament. We hope with those who hope. We live with suffering. We live with beauty. Let us go from this table as a renewed community, doing the radical work of Jesus that calls us to live justice-making lives of faith. We are followers of God's Way. We give thanks!

Hymn

Bless'd be the Tie That Binds

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BENEDICTION

As you go from here, may God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace. Do not let your faith or your witness grow cold. Remember: God's gift of faith is like a flame; when the embers of that flame have cooled, you must fan them again to keep them ablaze.

So remember what you have been taught and what you have experienced. Live in such a way that all who know you may see the light of God reflected in you.

And may the grace of God, the love of Jesus Christ, and the presence of the Holy Spirit be with you and among you in the days ahead. Amen.

Postlude